

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

INTRODUCTION.

1. "THE Song of Songs which is Solomon's," so designated by its most ancient (Hebrew) title, holds an unique position in sacred literature. It may be said to be the enigma of the Old Testament, as the Apocalypse is of the New.

The Song was regarded as an integral and venerated portion of the Hebrew canon before the commencement of the Christian era, and passed as such into the canon of the primitive Church: it has been always held both by the Church and by the Synagogue in the highest and most reverent estimation.¹

One or two allusions have been found in the Song to at least one older canonical Book (Genesis); and a few references to it occur in Books of later composition (Proverbs, Isaiah, Hosea); while two or three doubt-

ful allusions have been thought to be made to it by writers of the New Testament. These references are sufficient to establish the recognition of the Song as a part of Holy Scripture by some among the canonical writers.

2. The difficulties of the interpreter of the Song are unusually great. One lies in the peculiar form of composition. The Song of Songs might be called a lyrical-dramatic poem, but it is not a drama in the sense that it was either intended or adapted for representation.

Though the Song is a well-organized poetical whole, its unity² is made up of various parts and sections, of which several have so much independence and individuality as to have been not inaptly called Idylls, *i.e.* short poetic pieces of various forms containing each

¹ Rabbi Akiba as reported in the Mishnah, expressing the general judgment of Jewish schools and doctors in the first and second centuries, exclaimed: "No man in Israel ever doubted the canonicity of the Song of Songs, for the course of ages cannot vie with the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; all the Kethubim (Hagiographa) are indeed a holy thing, but the Song of Songs is a holy of holies." Origen, after enumerating six of the chief songs of Holy Scripture, *e.g.*, the songs of the Red Sea (Exod. xv.), of the Well (Num. xxi. 17, 18), of Moses (Deut. xxxii.), of Deborah (Judg. v.), of David (Ps. xviii.), of Isaiah (Isai. v.), and assigning to each its special significance in reference to the spiritual life, thus proceeds: "When thou hast passed

through all these, thou must mount yet higher to sing with the Bridegroom this Song of Songs." In the Book of Proverbs, according to St. Jerome, the young are taught the duties of life; in Ecclesiastes the middle-aged the vanity of earthly things; in the Song of Songs the perfected, who have the world beneath their feet, are joined to the embraces of the heavenly Bridegroom.

² Almost all recent critics now assume that the Song is not an anthology or collection of poems and fragments by various authors, but (as its Hebrew title indicates) a single poem, the work of one author. The old popular renderings of this title, "Cantica," "Canticles," or "Songs of Solomon," were consequently—as to the plural form—inexact and misleading.

a distinct subject of representation. These shorter pieces are all, however, so closely linked by a common purpose, as to form, when viewed in their right connexion, constituent parts of a larger and complete poem.

The earliest Jewish expositor of the Song as a whole, the author of the so-called Chaldee Targum, divides it in his historico-prophetic interpretation into two nearly equal halves at v. 1. All that precedes the close of that verse he makes refer to the times of the Exodus and of the first Temple, and all that follows to times subsequent to the deportation to Babylon down to the final restoration of Israel and the glories of the latter day. Whatever we may think of this allegorical interpretation, the division itself may, with other divisions—suggested by refrains and recurrent phrases, used it would seem of set purpose to indicate the commencement or the close of various sections,—prove a valuable clue to the true significance of the whole.

The two most important of these refrains are, first, the bride's three-fold adjuration to the Chorus (ii. 7, iii. 5, and viii. 4), marking at each place, as most interpreters agree, the close of one division of the poem; secondly, the question asked three times by a Chorus on as many distinct appearances of the bride (iii. 6, vi. 10, and viii. 5), marking, in like manner, a fresh commencement. These two refrains enable us to divide each half of the Song into three parts of nearly equal length, and make the whole poem consist of six parts; an arrangement which, in its main features, has obtained a majority of

suffrages among modern interpreters.³

The Song is throughout so far dramatic in form that it consists entirely of dialogue or monologue, the writer nowhere speaking in his own person; and the dialogue is connected with the development of a certain action. There are, we believe, only three chief speakers, "the bride," "the beloved," and a Chorus of "virgins" or "daughters of Jerusalem," having each their own manner and peculiar words and phrases, and these so carefully adhered to as to help us, in some cases of doubt, to determine the particular speaker (see i. 8 note)⁴.

If in other Scriptures are found words of indignation and wrath

³ Each of these parts, on a closer view, will be found to break up into two or three smaller sections, some quite idyllic in their character, and capable of being regarded as distinct little poems (*e.g.* ii. 8-17, iii. 1-5, v. 2-8). Here occur other recurrent phrases, *e.g.* "Behold, thou art fair" &c. (i. 15, iv. 1, 7, vi. 4, vii. 6), which is a formula of commencement; and the following formulæ of conclusion, "His left hand underneath my head" &c. (ii. 6, viii. 3); "Flee, my beloved" &c.; and "I am my beloved's" &c. (ii. 16, 17, vii. 10, viii. 14).

⁴ Origen adds a fourth speaker, a Chorus of young men, companions of the bridegroom (iii. 11). The bride constantly repeats her favourite phrases; *e.g.* the adjuration (ii. 7 &c., v. 8); "I am my beloved's" &c. (ii. 16, vi. 3, vii. 10, cp. viii. 10); "Flee (or "turn") my beloved" &c. (ii. 17, viii. 14); her beloved is a "shepherd" who "feeds" his flock (i. 7) "among lilies" (ii. 16, vi. 3). The beloved repeatedly employs the same terms in addressing the bride; *e.g.* "My love" or "friend" (i. 9, 15, ii. 2, 10, 13, iv. 1, 7, v. 2, vi. 4); "My dove" (ii. 14, v. 2, vi. 9); "My sister" (iv. 9, 10, v. 2); "Let me hear thy voice" (ii. 14, viii. 13); "Thou hast doves' eyes" (i. 15, iv. 1). Cp. also iv. 1-3 with vi. 5-7, and iv. 4, 5, with vii. 3, 4.

and terrible threatenings, the characteristics of this Book are sweetness, cheerfulness, and joy, characteristics somewhat at variance with "the hypothesis" so-called "of the shepherd lover."⁵ According to the view taken in this Commentary, there is but one lover in the Song, and one object of his affection, without rival or disturbing influence on either side. The beloved of the bride is in truth a king, and if she occasionally speaks of him as a shepherd, she intimates (vi. 2, 3) that she is speaking figuratively. Being herself a rustic maiden of comparatively lowly station she, by such an appellation, seeks to draw down him "whom her soul loveth" (i. 7, iii. 1-4), though he be the king of Israel, within her narrower circle of thoughts and aspirations. And, therefore, while the whole poem breathes of almost more than regal splendour and magnificence, the bride is nowhere represented as dwelling with any pride or satisfaction on the riches or grandeur of her beloved, but only on what he is to her in his own person as "chiefest among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely" (v. 10, 16 notes).

3. Most recent critics have agreed in assigning to the Song an early date.

The diction of the Song (on the character of which several critics

have insisted when arguing for a later date) is unquestionably peculiar. The poem is written in pure Hebrew of the best age, but with a large sprinkling of uncommon idioms and some very remarkable and apparently foreign words. Diction apart, most of the references and allusions in the Song would lead us to assign it, in accordance with its title, to the age of Solomon, nor does there seem to be sufficient reason for departing from the traditional belief that Solomon was himself the author; unless it be considered a panegyric composed in his honour by a prophet or poet of the king's own circle. In that case some of the peculiarities of diction and phraseology might be accounted for by assuming the author to have been a native of the Northern part of Solomon's dominions.

One striking characteristic of the writer of the Song is a love of natural scenes and objects, and familiarity with them as they would be presented, in the wide area⁶ of the Hebrew monarchy, to an observant eye in the age of Solomon. Thus it has been observed that this short poem contains 18 names of plants and 13 of animals. Not less delight is exhibited in the enumeration of those works of human art and labour and those articles of commerce, which in the time of Solo-

⁵ This hypothesis, held by many distinguished critics, assumes that there are two lovers in the Song, one a faithful simple-minded shepherd, the other a magnificent voluptuous king, by each of whom the affections of a Shulamite maiden are alternately solicited; while she, faithful in her allegiance to her shepherd-lover, rejects with scorn the monarch's blandishments, and finally compels him to abandon his pursuit.

⁶ Thus, allusions to the north of Palestine, in which the writer seems to take particular delight, are found in iv. 8, 11, 15, i. 16, 17. Allusions to the east of Jordan occur in ii. 17, iv. 1, vi. 5, 13; and allusions to the fields and valleys, the flowers and animals, on the west of the river in ii. 1, 12, 14, iv. 5, v. 12, vii. 13; The furthest south is alluded to in i. 14, iv. 4, 6, 12-14, vi. 4, vii. 4 &c.

mon so largely ministered to royal pomp and luxury.⁷

The time in which the Song was written was unquestionably one of peace and general prosperity, such as occurred but very rarely in the chequered history of Israel. All the indications named above concur with this in fixing that time as the age of Solomon.

4. The interpretation of the Song of Songs followed in this Commentary proceeds on the assumption that the primary subject and occasion of the poem was a real historical event, of which we have here the only record, the marriage union of Solomon with a shepherd-maiden of northern Palestine, by whose beauty and nobility of soul the great king had been captivated. Starting from this historical basis, the Song of Songs is in its essential character an ideal representation of human love in the relation of marriage (viii. 6, 7).⁸

5. According to this literal and historical interpretation, Parts I.—III. constitute the first half or one main division of the Poem, which may be called: **THE BRIDE AND**

HER ESPOUSALS WITH THE KING (i. 2—v. 1). The three parts represent each a different scene and distinct action.

Part I. **THE BRIDE IN THE KING'S CHAMBERS** (i. 2—ii. 7) subdivisible into four sections, corresponding to so many pauses in the action or dialogue.⁹

The scene is laid apparently in a wooded district of northern Palestine near the bride's home, where the king is spending part of the summer season in tents. The three chief speakers of the poem are now introduced in succession: first, A female Chorus (the "daughters of Jerusalem") commence by singing a short ode of two stanzas in praise of the absent king (i. 2-4). The next speaker, the Shulamite maiden ("the bride"), appears to have been recently brought from her country home to the king's pavilion, to be there affianced to him. A brief dialogue ensues between her and the Chorus (i. 5-7). The king himself appears, in the third place, and commending the beauty of the bride, receives from her in return words of praise and affection (i. 16, ii. 7). Throughout

⁷ *E.g.* the tower of Lebanon (vii. 4), David's tower in Jerusalem (iv. 4), rings and jewels (v. 14), crowns and necklaces (iii. 11, i. 10), palanquins and chariots (iii. 7, 9, i. 9), pillars of marble (v. 15), and every kind of spice and costly perfume (iv. 6, 14, i. 12, 13).

⁸ The allegorical method of interpretation depicts the Song to have been in its original purpose an ideal representation of the Communion of love between the Holy One and His Church as first exhibited in the election of Israel, not following, however, any actual developments of that relation in the changing fortunes of the chosen people, but representing (in accordance with the ideal truth of things) any transient disturbance of communion as resulting in the drawing of a closer bond. This is thought to be done by

means of a succession of lyric-dramatic songs, and under the allegory of the bridal love of the Shulamite and Solomon. The whole conception is thus based on the image referred to in Ex. xxxiv. 14 &c., and Lev. xxvi. 5 &c. (cp. Ex. xx. 5; Lev. xviii. 7; Num. xiv. 33; Deut. xxxii. 16, 31). That such a conception should suddenly spring up in the mind or age of Solomon into this full and vigorous life, is considered possible when the analogous development of the "Chokhmah" (or Hebrew Philosophy) in the same generation, is considered and compared with Pss. xlv. and lxxii. which equally belong to it.

⁹ 1. "The Prologue" (i. 2-4); 2. "The bride and the daughters of Jerusalem" (i. 5-8); 3. "The entrance of the king" (i. 9-14); 4. "The bride and the beloved" (i. 15-ii. 7).

this part the bride is represented as of inferior rank to him whom she calls her "beloved," shrinking at times from the splendours of the royal station that awaits her. She speaks of him both as a shepherd and as a king; but, in either character, as of one in whose favour and society she finds supreme satisfaction and entire rest. It is a day of early love, but not that of their first meeting.

Part II. MONOLOGUES OF THE BRIDE (ii. 8-iii. 5), comprising two sections.¹ This part carries us back to an earlier period than the former, and affords a glance at the previous history of the Shulamite in her relations to the king. She describes to the Chorus in two monologues how the beloved had visited her on a spring morning, and how she had afterwards dreamed of him at night.

Part III. ROYAL ESPOUSALS (iii. 6-v. 1), subdivisible into three sections.² The scene changes to Jerusalem, whither the bride is brought in royal state to be united to the king in marriage.

Parts IV.-VI. THE BRIDE THE KING'S WIFE (v. 2-viii. 14). The once lowly Shulamite, though now sharing with her beloved the high places of Israel, yet retains that sweetness, humility, and devoted affection, which in other scenes and circumstances had gained his heart. She invites him to revisit with her rural scenes, and share once more their simple pleasures (vii. 11-13).

Part IV. SEEKING AND FINDING

(v. 2-vi. 9) may be divided into three sections.³ The scene of this part is still Jerusalem. The bride after relating to the chorus a second dream concerning her beloved, pours forth a stream of richest fancies in his praise, who, as she complains, has departed from her. The Chorus offering to aid her in her search of him, suddenly the beloved reappears and gives in his turn the noblest commendations to the bride.

Part V. HOMEWARD THOUGHTS (vi. 10-viii. 4), subdivisible into four sections.⁴ The scene is still Jerusalem, or a palace-garden in the neighbourhood; but the bride's thoughts are now reverting to her northern home. She relates how in early spring she had first met the king in a walnut-garden in her own country. The Chorus ask her to perform a sacred dance seemingly well known to the bride and her country-folk. The bride complies, and while she is dancing and the Chorus are singing some stanzas in her praise, the king himself appears. The bride invites him to return with her into the country and to her mother's house.

Part VI. THE RETURN HOME (viii. 5-14), containing three very brief sections.⁵ The scene changes to the bride's birthplace, to which she has now returned with the

³ 1. "The bride's second dream" (v. 2-8); 2. "The bride's commendation of the beloved" (v. 9-vi. 3); 3. "The beloved's commendation of the bride" (vi. 4-9).

⁴ 1. "The Shulamite" (vi. 10-13); 2. "The dance of Mahanaim" (vii. 1-5); 3. "The king and the bride" (vii. 6-10); 4. "The bride's invitation" (vii. 11-viii. 4).

⁵ 1. "Last vows sealed" (viii. 5-7); 2. "The bride's intercession" (viii. 8-12); 3. "The Epilogue" (viii. 13, 14).

¹ 1. "The visit of the beloved" (ii. 8-17); 2. "The bride's first dream" (iii. 1-5).

² 1. "Bridal procession and royal entry" (iii. 6-11); 2. "The bridegroom's commendation of the bride" (iv. 1-7); 3. "The king's invitation" (iv. 8-v. 1).

king. The bride commends her brothers to the good graces of the king, and ends, at his request, by charming his ear with one last song, recalling to his memory a strain of other days (see viii. 14 note).

The history, which forms its groundwork is, however, throughout the poem, contemplated from an ideal point of view; and the fundamental idea expressed and illustrated is the awful all-constraining, the at once levelling and elevating power of the mightiest and most universal of human affections. The refrains and phrases, to which allusion has been already made, give expression at regular intervals to this idea.⁶

The ideal character of the whole poem is further evidenced by the way in which the chief points whereon the action turns are indicated;⁷ and it will be found that the two halves, or main divisions of the Song have throughout numerous well-balanced contrasts and correspondences.⁸

These and other peculiarities,

⁶ *E.g.* ii. 7, iii. 5, viii. 4, 7; vii. 6; viii. 6.

⁷ *E.g.* The question of the Chorus (iii. 6, vi. 10, viii. 5).

⁸ In the one the bride ascends to Jerusalem and at the king's invitation remains with him there, in the other at her request he returns with her to Shunem; in the one, the beloved seeks and wins the bride, in the other she seeks and obtains her will from him; in the one he claims her self-surrender, in the other she demands his vow of fidelity. In the first half of the Song the Chorus sing the praise of the king, in the second they celebrate the beauty of the bride and her triumph over him. Finally, in each of these main divisions the bride relates to her companions a significant dream in order more fully to express her feelings towards the beloved (iii. 1-5, v. 2-8), and in each she sings at his request a strain of peculiar import which seems to have a special music for his ear (ii. 17, viii. 14).

which impart to the Song of Songs its unique and enigmatical character, seem chiefly due to its idealizing treatment of an actual history felt at the time, and especially by the writer, to be profoundly interesting and significant.

Further, that the history thus idealized and the form in which it is presented have meanings beyond themselves and point to something higher, has ever been a deep-seated conviction in the mind both of the Church and of the Synagogue.

The two axes, so to speak, on which the main action of the poem appears alternately to revolve, may be found in the king's invitation to the bride on bringing her to Jerusalem (iv. 8), and in the bride's to the king in recalling him to Shunem (vii. 11-13, viii. 2); in these two invitations and their immediate consequences—the willing obedience of the bride and the ready condescension of the king, the first surrender on her part and the final vow on his—the writer of the Song seems to have intended to exhibit the two-fold energy, both for elevation and abasement, of that affection, to the delineation of which his work is dedicated. The omnipotent, transforming, and yet conserving power of faithful love is here seen in like yet diverse operation in the two personalities through whom it is exhibited. In the case of the bride we see the lowly rejoicing in unforeseen elevation without loss of virginal simplicity, in that of the beloved the highest is made happy through self-abasement without compromise of kingly honour.

It is then no mere fancy, which for so many ages past has been wont to find in the pictures and

melodies of the Song of Songs types and echoes of the actings and emotions of the highest Love, of Love Divine, in its relations to Humanity. Christians may trace in the noble and gentle history thus presented foreshadowings of the infinite condescensions of Incarnate Love ;—that Love which, first stooping in human form to visit us

in our low estate in order to seek out and win its object (Ps. cxxxvi. 23), and then raising along with itself a sanctified Humanity to the Heavenly Places (Eph. ii. 6), is finally awaiting there an invitation from the mystic Bride to return to earth once more and seal the Union for Eternity (Rev. xxii. 17).

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

^a 1 Kin. 4. 32. **CHAP. 1. THE** "song of songs, which is Solomon's.

- ^b ch. 4. 10. 2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth :
^c For ¹thy love is better than wine.
 3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments
 Thy name is as ointment poured forth,
 Therefore do the virgins love thee.
^c Hos. 11. 4. 4 "Draw me, "we will run after thee :
 John 6. 44. The king "hath brought me into his chambers :
 & 12. 32. We will be glad and rejoice in thee,
^d Phil. 3. 12, We will remember thy love more than wine :
 13, 14. "The upright love thee.
^e Ps. 45. 14, 15. 5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
 John 14. 2. As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.
 Eph. 2. 6. 6 Look not upon me, because I am black,
 Because the sun hath looked upon me :
 My mother's children were angry with me ;
 They made me the keeper of the vineyards ;

¹ Heb. *thy loves*.

² Or, *they love thee uprightly*.

I. 1. The "Song of songs," i.e. the best or most excellent of songs.
which is Solomon's] Literally, "to" or "for Solomon," i.e. belonging to Solomon as its author or concerning him as its subject. In a title or inscription, the former interpretation is to be preferred.

FIRST PART. I. 2—II. 7.

2-4. THE PROLOGUE. — The Song commences with two stanzas in praise of the king (now absent) by a Chorus of virgins belonging to the royal household. Expositors, Jewish and Christian, interpret the whole as spoken by the Church of the Heavenly Bridegroom.

2. *Let him kiss me*] Christian expositors have regarded this as a prayer of the Church under the old Covenant for closer communion with the Godhead through the Incarnation. Thus St. Gregory, "Every precept of Christ received by the Church is as one of His kisses."

thy love] Better as margin, i.e. thy endearments or tokens of affection are more desired than any other delights.

3. *Because &c.*] Better, *For fragrance are thine ointments good*, making with the clause that follows two steps of a climax: "thy perfumes are good, thy name the best of all perfumes." "Ointments" here are unguents or fragrant oils largely used for anointing at entertainments (cp. Ps. xxiii. 5; Luke vii. 46; John xii. 3).

thy name—poured forth] As unguents are

the sweeter for diffusion, so the king's name the wider it is known.

4. *the king hath brought me*] Made me a member of his household. This is true of every member of the Chorus as well as of the bride.

the upright love thee] Better as in marg., *uprightly do they* (i.e. "the virgins" of v. 3) *love thee*. Cp. the use of the same word in Ps. lviii. 1; Prov. xxiii. 31.

5-8. This section is made by the Targumist and other Jewish interpreters to adumbrate the condition of Israel in the wilderness; by some Christian expositors, that of the Gentile Church on her first conversion.

5. *I am black &c.*] Dark-hued, as the tents of Kedar with their black goats' hair coverings, rough and weather-stained, "but comely" (beautiful) as the rich hangings which adorn the pavilion of Solomon. Kedar was the name of an Arab tribe (Gen. xxv. 13; Ps. cxx. 5). The word itself signifies "dark" or "black." Possibly "tents of Kedar" stand here poetically for shepherds' tents in general (Isai. lx. 7).

6. *Look not upon me*] In wonder or scorn at my swarthy hue. It was acquired in enforced but honest toil: *the sun hath scanned me* (or "glared upon me") with his burning eye. The second word rendered "looked" is a word twice found in Job (xx. 9, xxviii. 7), and indicates in the latter place the piercing glance of a bird of prey.

- But mine own vineyard have I not kept.*
 7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest,
 Where thou makest *thy flock* to rest at noon:
 For why should I be ^{as} one that turneth aside by the flocks of
 thy companions?
 8 If thou know not, ¹O thou fairest among women,
 Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,
 And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.
 9 I have compared thee, ²O my love,
³To a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.
 10 ⁴Thy cheeks are comely with rows of *jewels*,
 Thy neck with chains of *gold*.
 11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.
 12 While the king *sitteth* at his table,
 My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.
 13 A bundle of myrrh *is* my wellbeloved unto me;
 He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

¹ ch. 5. 9.
 & 6. 1.

² ch. 2. 2, 10,
 13.
 & 4. 1, 7.
 & 5. 2.
 & 6. 4.
 John 15. 14,
 15.
³ 2 Chr. 1.
 16, 17.
⁴ Ezek. 10.
 11, 12, 13.

¹ Or, as one that is veiled.

my mother's children] Or, sons; a more affectionate designation than "brothers," and implying the most intimate relationship.

angry] This anger was perhaps but a form of jealous care for their sister's safety (cp. viii. 12). By engaging her in rustic labours they preserved her from idleness and temptation, albeit with a temporary loss of outward comeliness.

mine own vineyard] A figurative expression for herself or her beauty.

7. whom my soul loveth] A phrase recurring several times. It expresses great intensity of affection.

feedest] i.e. "Pursuest thy occupation as a shepherd;" so she speaks figuratively of the Son of David. Cp. ii. 16, vi. 3; Ps. xxiii. 1.

rest] Or, lie down; a term properly used of the couching of four-footed animals: "thy flock" is here therefore easily understood. Cp. Ezek. xxxiv. 14, 15; Ps. xxiii. 2; Jer. 1. 6.

as one that turneth aside] Or, goeth astray like an outcast.

8. The Chorus, and not the king, are the speakers here. Their meaning seems to be: If thy beloved be indeed a shepherd, then seek him yonder among other shepherds, but if a king, thou wilt find him here in his royal dwelling.

9-14. This and the next (i. 15-ii. 7) sections are regarded by ancient commentators (Jewish and Christian) as expressing "the love of espousals" (Jer. ii. 2) between the Holy One and His Church, first in the wilderness of the Exodus, and then in the wilderness of the world (Ezek. xx. 35, 36).

9. Or, to a mare of mine in the chariots of Pharaoh I liken thee, O my friend. (The last word is the feminine form of that rendered "friend" at v. 16.) The comparison of the bride to a beautiful horse is singularly like one in Theocritus, and some

have conjectured that the Greek poet, having read at Alexandria the Septuagint Version of the Song, may have borrowed these thoughts from it. If so, we have here the first instance of an influence of sacred on profane literature. The simile is peculiarly appropriate on the lips, or from the pen, of Solomon, who first brought horses and chariots from Egypt (1 K. x. 28, 29). As applied to the bride it expresses the stately and imposing character of her beauty.

10, 11. *rows...borders*] The same Heb. word in both places; ornaments forming part of the bride's head-dress, probably strings of beads or other ornaments descending on the cheeks. The introduction of "jewels" and "gold" in v. 10 injures the sense and destroys the climax of v. 11, which was spoken by a chorus (hence "we," not "I," as when the king speaks, v. 9). They promise the bride ornaments more worthy and becoming than the rustic attire in which she has already such charms for the king: "Ornaments of gold will we make for thee with studs (or 'points') of silver." The "studs" are little silver ornaments which it is proposed to affix to the golden (cp. Prov. xxv. 12), or substitute for the strung beads of the bride's necklace.

12-14. The bride's reply (v. 12) may mean, "While the king reclines at the banquet I anoint him with my costliest perfume, but he has for me a yet sweeter fragrance" (rv. 13, 14). According to Origen's interpretation, the bride represents herself as anointing the king, like Mary (John xii. 3), with her most precious unguents.

spikenard] An unguent of great esteem in the ancient world, retaining its Indian name in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. It is obtained from an Indian plant now called *jatamansi*.

13. Render: A bag of myrrh is my beloved to me, which lodgeth in my bosom.

14 My beloved *is* unto me as a cluster of ¹camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.

^k ch. 4. 1.
[&] 5. 12.

15 ^kBehold, thou *art* fair, ²my love;
 Behold, thou *art* fair; thou *hast* doves' eyes.

16 Behold, thou *art* fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:
 Also our bed *is* green.

17 The beams of our house *are* cedar,—and our ³rafters of fir.

CHAP. 2. I *AM* the rose of Sharon,—and the lily of the valleys.
 2 As the lily among thorns,—so *is* my love among the daughters.

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
 So *is* my beloved among the sons.

⁴I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
^aAnd his fruit *was* sweet to my ⁵taste.

^a Rev. 22.
 1, 2.

4 He brought me to the ²banqueting house,
 And his banner over me *was* love.

¹ Or, *cypress*, ch. 4. 13.

² Or, *my companion*.

³ Or, *galleries*.

⁴ Heb. *I delighted and sat down, &c.*

⁵ Heb. *palate*.

⁶ Heb. *house of wine*.

14. *camphire*] Rather, *Copher*, from which "cyprus" is probably derived (in marg. mis-spelt "cypress"), the name by which the plant called by the Arabs *henna* was known to the Greeks and Romans. It is still much esteemed throughout the East for the fragrance of its flowers and the dye extracted from its leaves. Engedi was famous for its vines, and the *henna* may have been cultivated with the vines in the same inclosures.

15.—II. 7. A dialogue ensues between the king and the bride, in which each in succession develops the thought or returns the commendations of the other. Almost every term of praise and endearment here employed may be exactly paralleled by those elsewhere made use of in Scripture to describe the relations of Israel or the Church to the Heavenly Bridegroom.

15. Outward beauty is of course the first here thought of; but this outward fairness is the symbol and accompaniment of an inward beauty indicated in the words *thine eyes are doves*, i.e. innocent, meek, and loving. The bride is herself called "a dove" (ii. 14 and vi. 9), as is the Church of Israel (Ps. lxxiv. 19; cp. Ps. lxxviii. 13).

16. The bride's reply. Cp. Isai. v. 1 and xxxiii. 17, both, perhaps, conscious references to this Song, Isaiah being the only prophet who thus speaks of the Holy One of Israel by the term constantly employed by the bride throughout the Song to designate him "whom her soul loveth."

yea, pleasant] More than corporeally beautiful, full of moral grace and charm (cp. 2 Sam. i. 23; Ps. xxvii. 4, xc. 17). "Christ is beautiful," says Bede, "in His Divinity, pleasant in His Humanity."

our bed is green] The epithet is appropriate for a bank or natural bed of grass and flowers.

17. The king replies, "The tall umbrageous forest-trees shut us in, as we sit together on this grassy bed, like the roof and walls of a many-chambered house, while cypress avenues on every side seem like the long-drawn corridors of a stately palace."

II. 1. The division of the chapters is unfortunate; ch. ii. ought to have begun at i. 15, or ch. i. to have been continued to ii. 7. The bride replies, "And I am like a lovely wild flower springing at the root of the stately forest-trees." The majority of Christian fathers assigned this verse to the king (Christ). Hebrew commentators generally assign it to the bride. It is quite uncertain what flower is meant by the word rendered (here and Isai. xxxv. 1) "rose." The etymology is in favour of its being a bulbous plant [the white narcissus, Conder]. "Sharon" is usually the proper name of the celebrated plain from Joppa to Cæsarea, between the hill-country and the sea, and travellers have remarked the abundance of flowers with which this plain is still carpeted in spring. But in the time of Eusebius and Jerome there was a smaller plain of Sharon (Saron) situated between Mount Tabor and the sea of Tiberias, which would be very near the bride's native home if that were Shunem.

2. The king resumes, taking up the bride's comparison: "As the lily excels in beauty the thorny shrubs among which it grows, so my friend excels her companions."

3-7. The bride's answer: "As the 'tapuach' with its fragrant fruit excels the barren trees of the wild wood, so my beloved his associates and friends &c." "Tapuach" may in early Hebrew have been a generic name for apple, quince, citron, orange &c.

4. *his banner*] As the standard is the rallying-point and guide of the individual sol-

- 5 Stay me with flagons, ¹ comfort me with apples :
For I *am* sick of love.
- 6 ^b His left hand *is* under my head,
And his right hand doth embrace me. ^b ch. 8. 3.
- 7 ^{2c} I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please. ^c ch. 3. 5.
^a S. 4.
- 8 The voice of my beloved ! behold, he cometh
Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.
- 9 ^d My beloved is like a roe or a young hart : ^d ver. 17.
Behold, he standeth behind our wall,
He looketh forth at the windows,
³ Shewing himself through the lattice.
- 10 My beloved spake, and said unto me,
^e Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. ^e ver. 13.
- 11 For, lo, the winter is past,—the rain is over *and* gone ;

¹ Heb. *straw me with apples.*

² Heb. *I adjure you.*

³ Heb. *flourishing.*

dier, so the bride, transplanted from a lowly station to new scenes of unwonted splendour, finds support and safety in the known attachment of her beloved. His "love" is her "banner." The thought is similar to that expressed in the name "Jehovah-nissi" (Ex. xvii. 15 note).

5. *flagons*] More probably *cakes of raisins* or *dried grapes* (2 Sam. vi. 19 note ; 1 Chr. xvi. 3 ; Hos. iii. 1). For an instance of the reviving power of dried fruit, see 1 Sam. xxx. 12.

6. *Render as a wish or prayer* : "O that his left hand were under my head, and that his right hand did embrace me !" Let him draw me to him with entire affection. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 27 ; Prov. iv. 8.

7. *Render : I adjure you...* by the gazelles, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love until it please. The A. V., "my love," is misleading. The affection or passion in itself, not its object, is here meant. This adjuration, three times significantly introduced as a concluding formula (marg. ref.), expresses one of the main thoughts of the poem ; namely, that genuine love is a shy and gentle affection which dreads intrusion and scrutiny ; hence the allusion to the gazelles and hinds, shy and timid creatures.

The complementary thought is that of viii. 6, 7, where love is again described, and by the bride, as a fiery principle.

SECOND PART. II. 8—III. 5.

8-17. The bride relates to the Chorus a visit which the beloved had paid her some time previously in her native home. He on a fair spring morning solicits her company. The bride, immersed in rustic toils, refuses for the present, but confessing her love, bids him return at the cool of day. It is a spring-time of affection which is here

described, still earlier than that of the former chapter, a day of pure first-love, in which, on either side, all royal state and circumstance is forgotten or concealed. Hence, perhaps, the annual recitation of the Song of Songs by the Synagogue with each return of spring, at the Feast of Passover, and special interpretations of this passage by Hebrew doctors, as referring to the paschal call of Israel out of Egypt, and by Christian fathers, as foreshadowing the evangelic mysteries of Easter—Resurrection and Regeneration. The whole scene has also been thought to represent the communion of a newly-awakened soul with Christ, He gradually revealing Himself to her, and bidding her come forth into fuller communion.

8. *voice*] Better, *sound*. Not a voice, but the sound of approaching footsteps is meant (cp. "noise," Isai. xiii. 4).

9. *like a roe*] *Gazelle* (cp. Prov. v. 19 note). The points of comparison here are beauty of form, grace, and speed of movement. In 2 Sam. ii. 18 ; 1 Chr. xii. 8, princes are compared to "gazelles."

wall] The clay-built wall of the house or vineyard of the bride's family, different from the strong wall of a city or fortress (v. 7, viii. 9, 10).

looketh forth at the windows] The meaning evidently is, that he is looking in at, or through, the window from the outside. Cp. v. 4 note.

shewing himself] Or, *peering*. Some, taking the marginal rendering, imagine that the radiant face of the beloved is thus compared to some beautiful flower entangled in the lattice-work which protects the opening of the window, whence he gazes down upon the bride.

10-13. *Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, and come away*. The stanza begins

- 12 The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
- 13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
And the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.
^{f ver. 10.} Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
- 14 O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places
of the stairs,
^{g ch. 8. 13.} Let me see thy countenance, ¹let me hear thy voice;
For sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely.
- ^{h Ps. 80. 13.} 15 Take us ^hthe foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines:
^{Ezek. 13. 4.} For our vines have tender grapes.
^{Luke 13. 32.}
- ^{i ch. 6. 3.} 16 My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his:—He feedeth among the
^{& 7. 10.} lilies.
- ^{k ch. 4. 6.} 17 ^kUntil the day break, and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my beloved,
^{l ver. 9.} And be thou ^llike a roe or a young hart
^{ch. 8. 14.} Upon the mountains ^lof Bether.
- ^{m Is. 26. 9.} **CHAP. 3.** BY ^anight on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth:
I sought him, but I found him not.
2 I will rise now, and go about the city

¹ Or, of division.

and ends with this refrain, in which the bride reports the invitation of the beloved that she should come forth with him into the open champaign, now a scene of verdure and beauty, and at a time of mirth and mutual affection. The season indicated by six signs (*vv* 11-13) is that of spring after the cessation of the latter rain in the first or paschal month (*Joel* ii. 23), *i.e.* Nisan or Abib, corresponding to the latter part of March and early part of April. Cyril interpreted *vv* 11, 12 of our Lord's Resurrection in the spring.

12. *The time of the singing &c.* *i.e.* The song of pairing birds. This is better than the rendering of the ancient Versions, "the pruning time is come."

13. *The vines &c.* The vines in blossom give forth fragrance. The fragrance of the vine blossom ("semadar"), which precedes the appearance of "the tender grape," is very sweet but transient.

14. *The secret places of the stairs* A hidden nook approached by a zig-zag path. The beloved urges the bride to come forth from her rock-girt home.

15. The bride answers by singing what appears to be a fragment of a vine-dresser's ballad, insinuating the vineyard duties imposed on her by her brethren (*i* 6), which prevent her from joining him. The destructive propensities of foxes or jackals in general are referred to, no grapes existing at the season indicated. Allegorical interpretations make these foxes symbolize "false teachers" (*cp.* *Ezek.* xiii. 4).

16. *feedeth among the lilies* Pursues his

occupation as a shepherd among congenial scenes and objects of gentleness and beauty.

17. *Until the day break* Or, rather, until the day breathe, *i.e.* until the fresh evening breeze spring up in what is called (*Gen.* iii. 8) "the cool" or breathing time of the day.

and the shadows flee *i.e.* Lengthen out, and finally lose their outlines with the sinking and departure of the sun (*cp.* *Jer.* vi. 4). As the visit of the beloved is most naturally conceived of as taking place in the early morning, and the bride is evidently dismissing him till a later time of day, it seems almost certain that this interpretation is the correct one which makes that time to be evening after sunset. The phrase recurs in *iv* 6.

mountains of Bether If a definite locality, identical with Bithron, a hilly district on the east side of the Jordan valley (2 *Sam.* ii. 29), not far from Mahanaim (*vi* 13 *marg.*). If used in a symbolical sense, mountains of "separation," dividing for a time the beloved from the bride. This interpretation seems to be the better, though the local reference need not be abandoned.

III. 1-5. The bride relates to the Chorus what appears to be an imaginary occurrence transacted in a dream (like that of *v* 2-8). The Targum takes this section to be typical of the wanderings of Israel after the Holy One in the wilderness, as the next (*vv* 6-11) is made to represent their entrance into the land.

1. *By night* *i.e.* In the night-hours.

- In the streets, and in the broad ways
 I will seek him whom my soul loveth :
 I sought him, but I found him not.
- 3 ^b The watchmen that go about the city found me : b ch. 5. 7.
To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth ?
- 4 *It was* but a little that I passed from them,
 But I found him whom my soul loveth :
 I held him, and would not let him go,
 Until I had brought him into my mother's house,
 And into the chamber of her that conceived me.
- 5 ^c I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, c ch. 2. 7.
& 8. 4.
 By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
 That ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love till he please.
- 6 ^d Who *is* this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of d ch. 8. 5.
 smoke,
 Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
 With all powders of the merchant ?
- 7 Behold his bed, which *is* Solomon's ;
 Threescore valiant men *are* about it, of the valiant of Israel.
- 8 They all hold swords, *being* expert in war :
 Every man *hath* his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the
 night.
- 9 King Solomon made himself ¹ a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.
- 10 He made the pillars thereof *of* silver,
 The bottom thereof *of* gold,—the covering of it *of* purple,
 The midst thereof being paved *with* love,
 For the daughters of Jerusalem.

¹ Or, a bed.

3. *the city*] One near the bride's native home, possibly Shunem.

4. *I held him*] This begins the fourth stanza. The bride's mother is mentioned again in vi. 9, and viii. 2.

5. See ii. 7 note.

THIRD PART.—III. 6-V. 1.

The principal and central action of the Song; the bride's entry into the city of David, and her marriage there with the king. Jewish interpreters regard this part of the poem as symbolizing the "first" entrance of the Church of the Old Testament into the land of promise, and her spiritual espousals, and communion with the King of kings, through the erection of Solomon's Temple and the institution of its acceptable worship. Christian Fathers, in a like spirit, make most things here refer to the espousals of the Church with Christ in the Passion and Resurrection, or the communion of Christian souls with Him in meditation thereon.

6-11. Two or more citizens of Jerusalem, or the Chorus of youths, companions of the bridegroom, describe the magnificent appearance of the bride borne in a royal litter, and then that of the king in festive joy wearing a nuptial crown.

6. "Wilderness" is here pasture-land in

contrast with the cultivated districts and garden-enclosures round the city. Cp. Jer. xxiii. 10; Joel ii. 22; Isa. xlii. 11; Ps. lxxv. 12.

pillars of smoke] Here an image of delight and pleasure. Frankincense and other perfumes are burned in such abundance round the bridal equipage that the whole procession appears from the distance to be one of moving wreaths and columns of smoke.

all powders of the merchant] Every kind of spice forming an article of commerce.

7. *bed*] Probably the royal litter or palanquin in which the bride is borne, surrounded by his own body-guard consisting of sixty mighties of the mighty men of Israel.

8. *because of fear in the night*] i.e. Against night alarms. Cp. Ps. xci. 5.

9, 10. A stately bed hath king Solomon made for himself of woods (or trees) of the Lebanon. The word rendered "bed" occurs nowhere else in Scripture, and is of doubtful etymology and meaning. It may denote here (1) the bride's car or litter; or (2) a more magnificent vehicle provided for her reception on her entrance into the city, and in which perhaps the king goes forth to meet her. It has been made under Solomon's own directions of the costliest woods (ceda and pine) of the Lebanon; it is furnished with "pillars of silver" supporting

- 11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion,
And behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother
crowned him
In the day of his espousals,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

- ^a ch. 1. 15. **CHAP. 4. BEHOLD,** "thou *art* fair, my love; behold, thou *art* fair;
& 5. 12. Thou *hast* doves' eyes within thy locks:
^b ch. 6. 5. Thy hair *is* as a ^bflock of goats, ¹that appear from mount
Gilead.
^c ch. 6. 6. 2 "Thy teeth *are* like a flock of sheep *that are even* shorn, which
came up from the washing;
Whereof every one bear twins, and none *is* barren among them.
3 Thy lips *are* like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech *is* comely:
^d ch. 6. 7. "Thy temples *are* like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.
^e ch. 7. 4. 4 "Thy neck *is* like the tower of David builded ¹for an armoury,
^f Neh. 3. 10. Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty
men.
^g See Prov. 5. 19. 5 "Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes that are twins,
Which feed among the lilies.
ch. 7. 3. 6 "Until the day ²break, and the shadows flee away,
^h ch. 2. 17. I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of
frankincense.
ⁱ Eph. 5. 27. 7 "Thou *art* all fair, my love;—*there is* no spot in thee.
8 Come with me from Lebanon, *my* spouse, with me from
Lebanon:

¹ Or, *that eat of*, &c.² Heb. *breathe*.

a "baldachin" or "canopy of gold" (not "bottom" as in A.V.), and with "a seat (not 'covering') of purple cushions," while "its interior is paved with (mosaic work, or tapestry of) love from (not 'for') the daughters of Jerusalem;" the meaning being that this part of the adornment is a gift of love, whereby the female Chorus have testified their goodwill to the bride, and their desire to gratify the king.

11. *daughters of Zion*] So called here to distinguish them from the bride's companions, who are always addressed by her as "daughters of Jerusalem."

his mother] Bathsheba (1 K. i. 11). This is the last mention of her in sacred history.

IV. 1-6. The king in a lyric song of five stanzas commends the beauty of the bride.

1. *Thou hast doves' eyes* &c.] *Thine eyes are doves behind thy veil*. So also in v. 3, vi. 7; Isai. xlvii. 2, "veil" is better than "locks."

that appear from &c.] Or, "that couch upon Mount Gilead." The point of comparison seems to be the multitudinousness of the flocks seen browsing on the verdant slopes of the rich pasture-lands (Num. xxxii. 1; Mic. vii. 14).

2. *Whereof* &c.] Or, "all of them are equal pairs, and none is bereft among

them," *i.e.* none has lost her mate. The points of comparison in this simile are of course brilliant whiteness, regularity, and completeness of number.

3. *thy speech is comely*] Perhaps, "thy mouth," *i.e.* the organ of speech.

4. The "tower of David" may be that mentioned in Neh. iii. 25-27; Mic. iv. 8. For the custom of hanging shields and other weapons in and upon buildings suited for the purpose, see Ezek. xxvii. 10, 11.

7-V. 1. The king meeting the bride in the evening of the same day, expresses once more his love and admiration in the sweetest and tenderest terms and figures. He calls her now "bride" (spouse, v. 8) for the first time, to mark it as the hour of their espousals, and "sister-bride" (spouse, vv. 9, 10, 12, v. 1), to express the likeness of thought and disposition which henceforth unites them. At the same time he invites her to leave for his sake her birthplace and its mountain neighbourhood, and live henceforth for him alone.

8. The order and collocation of words in the Hebrew is grand and significant. With me from Lebanon, O bride, with me from Lebanon thou shalt come, shalt look around (or wander forth) from the height (lit. "head") of Amanah, from the height of Shenir and Hermon, from dens of lions, from mountain-haunts of leopards. It is

- Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir ^kand ^k Deut. 3. 9.
 Hermon,
 From the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.
 9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse;
 Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,
 With one chain of thy neck.
 10 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!
 How much better is thy love than wine!
 And the smell of thine ointments than all spices!
 11 Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb:
^m Honey and milk are under thy tongue;
 And the smell of thy garments is ⁿ like the smell of Lebanon.
 12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse;
 A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
 13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant
 fruits;
 14 ³ Camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron;
 Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;
 Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:
 15 A fountain of gardens, a well of ^o living waters,
 And streams from Lebanon. ^o John 4. 10.
 16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
 Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. ^{& 7. 38.}

¹ Or, taken away my heart.

² Heb. barred.

³ Or, cypress, ch. 1. 14.

evidently a solemn invitation from the king in the sense of Ps. xlv. 10, 11. Four peaks in the same mountain-system are here named as a poetical periphrasis for northern Palestine, the region in which is situated the native home of the bride. (1) Amana (or Abana, 2 K. v. 12), that part of the Anti-libanus which overlooks Damascus. (2) Shenir or Senir, another peak of the same range (according to Deut. iii. 9, the Amorite name for Hermon, but spoken of here and 1 in Chro. v. 23 as distinct from it). (3) Hermon, the celebrated mountain which forms the culminating point of the Anti-libanus, on the north-eastern border of the Holy Land. (4) Lebanon, properly the western range overlooking the Mediterranean, but here used as a common designation for the whole mountain-system. Leopards are still not unfrequently seen there, but the lion has long since disappeared.

9-11. The smiles employed refer to the graces of adornment, speech, and gesture, as expressions of inward character and sentiment.

9. *with one of thine eyes*] Rather, *with one look of thine*.

11. *honeycomb*] Lit. Thy lips distil a dropping (of pure honey). Cp. marg. ref.

12-15. The loveliness and purity of the bride are now set forth under the image of a paradise or garden fast barred against intruders, filled with rarest plants of excellent fragrance, and watered by abundant streams. Cp. Prov. v. 15-20.

12. *a fountain sealed*] i.e. A well-spring

covered with a stone (Gen. xxix. 3), and sealed with "the king's own signet" (Dan. vi. 17; cp. Matt. xxvii. 66).

13. *orchard*] This is the rendering here and in Eccles. ii. 5 of "pardes" (see Neh. ii. 8 note). The pomegranate was for the Jews a sacred fruit, and a characteristic product of the Land of Promise (cp. Exod. xxviii. 33, 34; Num. xx. 5; Deut. viii. 8; 1 K. vii. 18, 20). It is frequently mentioned in the Song, and always in connexion with the bride. It abounds to this day in the ravines of the Lebanon.

camphire] Cyprus. See i. 14 note.

13-15. Seven kinds of spices (some of them with Indian names, e.g. aloes, spikenard, saffron) are enumerated as found in this symbolic garden. They are for the most part pure exotics which have formed for countless ages articles of commerce in the East, and were brought at that time in Solomon's ships from southern Arabia, the great Indian Peninsula, and perhaps the islands of the Indian Archipelago. The picture here is best regarded as a purely ideal one, having no corresponding reality but in the bride herself. The beauties and attractions of both north and south,—of Lebanon with its streams of sparkling water and fresh mountain air, of Engedi with its tropical climate and henna plantations, of the spice-groves of Arabia Felix, and of the rarest products of the distant mysterious Ophir,—all combine to furnish one glorious representation, "Thou art all fair!"

16. The bride's brief reply, declaring her

- ^p ch. 5. 1. ^p Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat his pleasant fruits.
- ^a ch. 4. 16. **CHAP. 5.** I ^a AM come into my garden, my sister, my spouse :
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice ;
- ^b ch. 4. 11. ^b I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey ;
I have drunk my wine with my milk :
Eat, O ^c friends ; drink, ¹ yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.
- ^c Luke 15.
7, 10.
John 3. 29.
& 15. 14.
^d Rev. 3. 20.
- 2 I sleep, but my heart waketh :
It is the voice of my beloved ^d that knocketh, *saying*,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled :
For my head is filled with dew,
And my locks with the drops of the night.
- 3 I have put off my coat ; how shall I put it on ?
I have washed my feet ; how shall I defile them ?
- 4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door
And my bowels were moved ² for him.
- 5 I rose up to open to my beloved ;
And my hands dropped *with* myrrh,
And my fingers *with* ³ sweet smelling myrrh,
Upon the handles of the lock.

¹ Or, and be drunken with
lovers.

² Or, (as some read) *in me*.

³ Heb. *passing, or, running*
about.

affection for the king and willingness to belong to him.

V. 1. *my honeycomb*] Lit. "my reed," or "my wood," i.e. the substance itself, or portions of it in which the comb is formed. The bees in Palestine form their combs not only in the hollows of trees and rocks, but also in reeds by the river-banks. The king's meaning appears to be: "All pleases me in thee, there is nothing to despise or cast away."

Eat, O friends] A salutation from the king to his assembled guests, or to the Chorus of young men his companions, bidding them in the gladness of his heart (iii. 11) partake of the banquet. So ends this day of outward festivity and supreme heart-joy. The first half of the Song of Songs is fitly closed. The second half of the poem commences (v. 2) with a change of tone and reaction of feeling similar to that of iii. 1. It terminates with the sealing (viii. 6, 7) of yet deeper love.

FOURTH PART. V. 2—VI. 9.

Some time may be supposed to have elapsed since the bride's solemn espousals with the king (iv. 7-v. 1). A transient cloud of doubt or estrangement is now passing over her soul, as by the relation of this dream she intimates to her friends. Ancient allegorical interpreters find here a symbol of the condition and feelings of Israel during the Babylonian Captivity, when the glories and privileges of Solomon's Temple were no more, and the manifested Presence of the Holy One had been with-

drawn. Israel in exile seeks the Lord (v. 8), and will find Him again in the second Temple (vi. 3-9).

2. *I sleep, but my heart waketh*] A poetical periphrasis for "I dream." Cp. the ancient saying: "Dreams are the vigils of those who slumber, hopes are waking dreams." *the voice*] Or, "sound." Cp. ii. 8, note. She hears him knocking before he speaks. *my undefiled*] Lit. "my perfect one." Vulg. "immaculata mea." Cp. iv. 7.

3. She makes trivial excuses, as one in a dream.

4. *put in his hand*] *Through* (lit. "from") *the hole* (of the lock), in order to raise the pins by which the bolt was fastened. The Oriental lock is a hollow piece of wood attached to the doorpost, into which a sliding-bolt is made to run. As soon as the bolt has been driven home a number of pins drop into holes prepared in it for their reception. To raise these pins, and so enable the bolt to be withdrawn, is to unfasten the lock. This is commonly done by means of the key (lit. "opener"), but may often be accomplished by the fingers if dipped in paste or some other adhesive substance. For such a purpose the beloved inserts his fingers here anointed with the costly unguent, which will presently distil on those of the bride when she rises to open to him.

5. *sweet smelling myrrh*] Or (as in margin) "running myrrh," that which first and spontaneously exudes, i.e. the freshest, finest myrrh. Even in withdrawing he has left this token of his unchanged love.

- 6 I opened to my beloved ;
But my beloved had withdrawn himself, *and* was gone :
My soul failed when he spake :
‘I sought him, but I could not find him ;
I called him, but he gave me no answer. ‘ ch. 3. 1.
- 7 ‘The watchmen that went about the city found me, / ch. 3. 3.
They smote me, they wounded me ;
The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.
- 8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
If ye find my beloved, ‘that ye tell him,
That I *am* sick of love.
- 9 What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, ‘O thou fairest ‘ ch. 1. 8
among women ?
What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, that thou dost
so charge us ?
- 10 My beloved *is* white and ruddy,
‘The chiefest among ten thousand.
- 11 His head *is as* the most fine gold,
His locks *are* ‘bushy, *and* black as a raven.
- 12 ‘His eyes *are as the eyes of* doves by the rivers of waters, ‘ ch. 1. 15.
Washed with milk, *and* ‘fitly set. & 4. 1.
- 13 His cheeks *are as* a bed of spices, *as* ‘sweet flowers :
His lips *like* lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.
- 14 His hands *are as* gold rings set with the beryl :
His belly *is as* bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

¹ Heb. *what*.

² Heb. *a standard-bearer*.

³ Or, *curled*.

⁴ Heb. *sitting in fulness*,
that is, *fitly placed*, *and*
set as a precious stone in

the foil of a ring.
⁵ Or, *towers of perfumes*.

8. The bride, now awake, is seeking her beloved. The dream of his departure and her feelings under it have symbolized a real emotion of her waking heart.

V. 9—VI. 3. The bride's commendation of the beloved. In the allegorical interpretations of Jewish expositors all is here spoken by exiled Israel of the Holy One Whose praise she sings "by the waters of Babylon" (Ps. cxxxvii. 1). Christian interpreters apply the description directly to the Incarnate Son, partly in His Eternal Godhead, but chiefly in His risen and glorified Humanity.

10. *My beloved is white and ruddy*] Cp. 1 Sam. xvi. 12; Dan. vii. 9. The complexion most admired in youth. Jewish interpreters remark that He Who is elsewhere called "the Ancient of Days" is here described as the Ever-Young. "White in His virgin-purity," says St. Jerome, "and ruddy in His Passion."

the chiefest among ten thousand] Lit. "a bannered one among a myriad;" hence one signalized, a leader of ten thousand warriors.

11. *His head is as the most fine gold*] Perhaps in the sense of noble and precious as the finest gold. Lam. iv. 2.

bushy] Waving like branches of the palm.

12. Or, *His eyes are doves*. The comparison is to doves seen by streams of water

washing in milk (i.e. milk-white), and sitting on fulness (i.e. on the full or abundant water-flood).

fitly set] This rendering supposes that the eyes within their sockets are compared to precious stones set in the foil of a ring (see marg.); but the other rendering is preferable. The milk-white doves themselves, sitting by full streams of water, or reflected in their fittings athwart the glassy surface, present images of the calm repose and vivid glances of the full pure lustrous eyes of the beloved.

13. *sweet flowers*] Better as in the margin, i.e. plants with fragrant leaves and flowers trained on trellis-work.

like lilies] Are lilies dropping liquid myrrh (see v. 5 note). Perhaps the fragrance of the flowers, or the delicate curl of the lip-like petals, is here the point of comparison, rather than the colour.

14. *His hands &c.*] Are golden rings or cylinders. The fingers of the bent or closed hand are compared to a massive ring or set of rings; or, if outstretched or straightened, to a row of golden rods or cylinders.

the beryl] The *tarshish* (cp. Ex. xxviii. 20), probably the chrysolite of the ancients (so called from its gold colour), the modern topaz.

His belly &c.] His body (the Hebrew term applies to the whole body, from the shoulders

- 15 His legs *are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold* :
His countenance *is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*
16 ¹His mouth *is most sweet* : yea, he *is altogether lovely.*
This *is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

- ^a ch. 1. 8. **CHAP. 6.** WHITHER is thy beloved gone, ^aO thou fairest among women ?
Whither is thy beloved turned aside ? that we may seek him with thee.
2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.
^b ch. 2. 16. & 7. 10. 3 ^bI *am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine* :
He feedeth among the lilies.
^c ver. 10. 4 Thou *art* beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem, — ^cterrible as *an army* with banners.
^d ch. 4. 1. 5 Turn away thine eyes from me, for ²they have overcome me :
Thy hair *is* ^das a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.
^e ch. 4. 2. 6 ^eThy teeth *are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing,*
Whereof every one beareth twins, and *there is not one barren*
among them.
^f ch. 4. 3. 7 ^fAs a piece of a pomegranate *are thy temples within thy locks.*
8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,
And virgins without number.
9 My dove, my undefiled *is but one* ;
She *is the only one* of her mother,
She *is the choice one* of her that bare her.
The daughters saw her, and blessed her ;
Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

¹ Heb. *His palate.*² Or, *they have puffed me up.*

to the thighs) is a piece of ivory workmanship overlaid with sapphires. The sapphire of the ancients seems to have been the lapis lazuli.

15. *His countenance*] Or, *his appearance* (his whole port and mien, but especially head and countenance) "*is as the Lebanon.*"

16. *he is altogether lovely*] Lit. the whole of him desires or delights ; the plural substantive expressing the notion of the superlative. Theodorët, applying to our Lord the whole description, interprets well its last term : "Why should I endeavour to express His beauty piecemeal when He is in Himself and altogether the One longed-for, drawing all to love, compelling all to love, and inspiring with a longing (for His company) not only those who see, but also those who hear?"

VI. 1, 2. The question put by the Chorus, and the answer it receives from the bride, shew that the loss and seeking are not to be taken too seriously.

4-9. The section might be entitled, "Renewed declaration of love after brief estrangement."

4. *Tirzah...Jerusalem*] Named together as the then two fairest cities of the land. For Jerusalem compare Ps. xlviii. 2.

"Tirzah" (i.e. "Grace" or "Beauty") was an old Canaanitish royal city (Josh. xii. 24). It became again a royal residence during the reigns of Baasha and his three successors in the kingdom of the ten tribes, and may well therefore have been famed for its beauty in the time of Solomon.

terrible as &c.] *Awe-inspiring as the bannered (hosts).* The warlike image, like others in the Song, serves to enhance the charm of its assured peace.

5. Even for the king the gentle eyes of the bride have an awe-striking majesty. Such is the condescension of love. Now follows (vv. 5-7) the longest of the repetitions which abound in the Song, marking the continuance of the king's affection as when first solemnly proclaimed (iv. 1-6). The two descriptions belong, according to some (Christian) expositors, to the Church of different periods, e.g. to the primitive Church in the splendour of her first vocation, and to the Church under Constantine; other (Jewish) expositors apply them to "the congregation of Israel" under the first and second Temples respectively.

9. The king contrasts the bride with the other claimants for her royal estate or favour (v. 8). She not only outshines them

- 10 Who *is* she *that* looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon, clear as the sun,
And terrible as an army with banners? 9 ver. 4.
- 11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the
valley,
And ^ato see whether the vine flourished, *and* the pomegranates ^ach. 7. 12.
budded.
- 12 ¹Or ever I was aware, my soul ²made me *like* the chariots of
Ammi-nadib.
- 13 Return, return, O Shulamite;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.
What will ye see in the Shulamite?
As it were the company ³of two armies.
- ¹ Heb. *I knew not.* ² Or, *set me on the chariots
of my willing people.* ³ Or, *of Mahanaim,*
Gen. 32. 2.

all for him, but herself has received from them disinterested blessing and praise.

This passage is invaluable as a divine witness to the principle of monogamy under the Old Testament and in the luxurious age of Solomon.

FIFTH PART. VI. 10—VIII. 4.

The Chorus address the bride here only as the Shulamite, and beg her to perform for their entertainment a sacred dance (see vi. 13) of her own country. The bride, after complying with their request, while they sing some stanzas in her praise (vii. 1-5), and after receiving fresh commendations from the king (vii. 6-10), invites him to return with her to her mother's house (vii. 11-viii. 4). Many Jewish allegorists interpret the whole as referring to the times of the second Temple, and to the present dispersion of Israel, during which, God continuing to vouchsafe His mercy, Israel prays for final restoration, the coming of Messiah, and the glory of the latter day. Christian interpreters have made similar applications to the now militant Church looking for the Second Advent, or to the ancient Synagogue praying for the Incarnation.

10. *as the morning*) The glorious beauty of the bride bursts upon them like a second dawn, as she comes forth to meet them at the commencement of another day. Peculiar poetical words are used for "sun" (burning heat) and "moon" (white one). The same terms are applied to sun and moon in Isai. xxiv. 23, xxx. 26.

11-12. The bride's words may be paraphrased: "You speak of me as a glorious beauty; I was lately but a simple maiden engaged in rustic toils. I went down one day into the walnut-garden" (the walnut abounded on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, and is still common in Northern Palestine) "to inspect the young plants of the vale" (i.e. the wady, or watercourse, with now verdant banks in the early spring after

the rainy season), "and to watch the budding and blossoming of vine and pomegranate." Cp. ii. 11-13 notes. "Then suddenly, ere I was myself aware, my soul" (the love-bound heart) "had made me the chariot of a lordly people" (i.e. an exalted personage, one who resides on the high places of the earth; cp. 2 K. ii. 12, xiii. 14, where Elijah and Elisha, as the spiritual leaders of the nation, are "the chariot and horsemen of Israel," cp. also Isa. xxii. 18). This last clause is another instance of the love for military similitudes in the writer of the Song.

Ammi-nadi-bi [Lit. my people a noble one. The reference is either to Israel at large as a wealthy and dominant nation, under Solomon, or to the bride's people (the Shulamites) in particular, to the chief place among whom, by her union with the king, she is now exalted.

13. *Return, return*] About to withdraw, the bride is recalled by the Chorus, desiring yet a little longer to contemplate a grace and beauty which has won all hearts.

Shulamite] Probably the same as "Shunamite," i.e. a native of the town or district of Shunem, situated in the territory of Issachar (Josh. xix. 18), on the slopes of the Little Hermon, overlooking the plain of Jezreel. It is now called Sülem.

see] Look or gaze at. The bride's modest reply, taking up their words, and wondering at their request. The Chorus answer with a further petition.

"As it were the company of two armies"] Or, rather, the dance of Mahanaim (see margin), a well-known sacred dance, taking its name from the locality in which it originated (Gen. xxxii. 2; Josh. xxi. 38). Some, taking "Mahanaim" to be an ordinary designation for "the Angels" or "Angelic Hosts," render here "a dance as it were of angel-choirs," i.e. one of peculiar grace and beauty. The former of these interpretations is to be preferred.

^a Ps. 45. 13. **CHAP. 7.** HOW beautiful are thy feet with shoes, "O prince's daughter!

The joints of thy thighs *are* like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning workman.

2 Thy navel *is like* a round goblet, *which* wanteth not 'liquor:
Thy belly *is like* an heap of wheat set about with lilies.

^b ch. 4. 5.

3 ^bThy two breasts *are* like two young roes *that are* twins.

^c ch. 4. 4.

4 'Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory;
Thine eyes *like* the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim:

Thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

5 Thine head upon thee *is like* ²Carmel,
And the hair of thine head like purple;
The king *is* ³held in the galleries.

6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

7 This thy stature *is like* to a palm tree,
And thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree,
I will take hold of the boughs thereof:
Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,
And the smell of thy nose like apples;

¹ Heb. mixture.

² Or, crimson.

³ Heb. bound.

VII. 1-5. The Shulamite complies with the request of her attendants, and as she glides before them in the dance, they sing in further commendation of her beauty of form and grace of movement. The description in the original consists, like iv. 1-5, of five stanzas nearly coinciding with the verses in the text.

1. *thy feet with shoes*] Or, *thy steps in the sandals*: the bride's feet are seen in motion in the dance. "Joints" might be rendered circling movements.

prince's daughter] Or, daughter of a noble; the bride is of honourable though not of kingly birth.

like jewels] The image suggested is that of large well-formed pearls or other jewels skilfully strung or linked together.

2. Or, "Thy lap is like a moon-shaped bowl where mixed wine faileth not." The wine in the bowl rising to the brim adds to the beauty of the vessel, and gives a more pleasing image to the eye. Some interpret, "thy girdle is like a moon-shaped bowl," or "bears a moon-shaped ornament" (cp. Isai. iii. 18).

set about with lilies] The contrast is one of colours, the flowers, it may be, representing the purple of the robe. "The heap of wheat is not seen because covered by the lilies."

4. *a tower of ivory*] The tower of ivory, the allusion being to some particular tower, built probably by Solomon (1 K. x. 21).

fishpools in Heshbon] Or, simply pools. Among the ruins to the south of Heshbon still remain a number of deep wells cut in the rock, and a large reservoir of water.

The simile well sets forth the appearance of a large clear liquid eye (cp. v. 12 note).

gate of Bath-rabbim]. Perhaps the gate looking towards Rabbath-Ammon on the north side of the city, though this does not agree with the wells above mentioned; or, the gate of the city "full of people" (Lam. i. 1); or, an expression indicating the gate itself as the scene of numerous gatherings.

nose] Better perhaps "face" or "brow." *the tower of Lebanon*] Possibly "the house of the forest of Lebanon" or part of it (1 K. vii. 2, ix. 19), built by Solomon in the early part of his reign; or possibly a watchtower erected by David to overawe Damascus after his war with Hadadezer (2 Sam. viii. 6).

5. Cp. and contrast with v. 15. The rendering in the margin takes "Carmel" as the name of a colour, equivalent to "crimson" (rendered "crimson" in 2 Chr. ii. 7, 14, iii. 14). This interpretation is favoured by the parallelism with "purple," but removes a beautiful image.

purple] A deep violet black. *the king &c.*] Rather, "A king is bound in the tresses or windings of thy hair." These last words indicate the king's approach.

6-10. A brief dialogue; vv. 6-9 are spoken by the king, v. 9 and v. 10 by the bride.

6. A general sentiment.

How fair, and what a charm hast thou, O love! among delightful things!

Cp. ii. 7, viii. 6, 7 notes.

7. *This thy stature*] The king now ad-

- 9 And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved,
that goeth down ¹ sweetly,
Causing the lips ² of those that are asleep to speak.
- 10 ³ I am my beloved's, and ⁴ his desire is toward me. ^d ch. 2. 16.
- 11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field ; ^e G. 3.
Let us lodge in the villages. ^f Ps. 45. 11.
- 12 Let us get up early to the vineyards ;
Let us ¹ see if the vine flourish, *whether* the tender grape ² / ch. 6. 11.
³ appear,
And the pomegranates bud forth :
There will I give thee my loves.
- 13 The ⁴ mandrakes give a smell, ^g Gen. 30. 14.
And at our gates ⁵ are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and ^h Matt. 13. 52.
old,
Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.
- CHAP. 8. O THAT thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts
of my mother !
When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee ;
Yea, ¹ I should not be despised.
- 2 I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, *who*
would instruct me :
I would cause thee to drink of ² spiced wine of the juice of my ⁱ Prov. 9. 2.
pomegranate.
- 3 ³ His left hand *should be* under my head,
And his right hand should embrace me. ^j ch. 2. 6.
- 4 ⁴ I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
⁵ That ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please. ^k ch. 2. 7.
^l & 3. 5.

¹ Heb. *straightly*.
² Or, *of the ancient*.
³ Heb. *open*

⁴ Heb. *they should not*
despise me.

⁵ Heb. *why should ye stir*
up, or, why, &c.

dresses the bride, comparing her to palm, vine, and apple-tree for nobility of form and pleasantness of fruit ; and the utterances of her mouth to sweetest wine.

9. *for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly*] Words of the bride interrupting the king, and finishing his sentence, that goeth smoothly or pleasantly for my beloved. Cp. Prov. xxiii. 31.

10. *his desire is toward me*] All his affection has me for its object. The bride proceeds to exercise her power over his loving will.

11.—VIII. 4. Cp. iv. 8. The bride in her turn invites her beloved to revisit in her company the lowly scenes of pastoral life, out of which his grace had raised her. So in the latter day the Church of the Redeemed in heavenly places will pray for the Lord's return to earth.

12. *the tender grape appear*] Or, *the vine-blossom unfold*. See ii. 13 note. It is now again the same season as that in which the king had first visited the bride (ii. 8–17). This thought enhances her desire to have him with her there again.

13. *The mandrakes*] Love-apples.
all manner of pleasant fruits] Or, *things*, both fruits and flowers ; “the new” to be freshly gathered, “the old” already laid up in store.

VIII. 1. Royal rank and splendour are grown wearisome. The king once called her “sister” and “sister-bride.” Would he were indeed as a “brother,” her mother's own child whom she might meet, embrace, and welcome everywhere without restraint or shame. Her love for him is simple, sacred, pure, free from the unrest and the stains of mere earthly passion.

2. *who would instruct me*] Or, *thou shouldst teach me* (Isai. liv. 13). Some allegorists make the whole passage (vii. 11–viii. 2) a prayer of the Synagogue for the Incarnation of the Word, like i. 2 (see note). Others, a prayer of the Church under both covenants for that complete union with the Incarnate Godhead which is still future.

3. The bride now turns to and addresses the Chorus as before (marg. ref.).

4. *that ye stir not up*] Lit. as in the margin. For “my love” read as before love. The omission of “the roes and hinds” here is noticeable. Hebrew doctors regard this charge here and elsewhere (ii. 7, iii. 5) as an admonition to Israel not to attempt obtaining a possession of, or restoration to, the Promised Land, and union or reunion there with the Holy One, before being inwardly prepared for it by the trials of the wilderness and the exile. This interpreta-

- ^d ch. 3. 8. 5 ^d Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved ?
- I raised thee up under the apple tree :
There thy mother brought thee forth :
There she brought thee forth *that* bare thee.
- ^e Isai. 49. 16.
Jer. 22. 24.
Hag. 2. 23. 6 ^e Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
As a seal upon thine arm :
For love is strong as death ;
Jealousy is ¹ cruel as the grave :
The coals thereof are coals of fire,
Which hath a most vehement flame.
- 7 Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it :
^f Prov. 6. 35. ^f If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
It would utterly be contemned.
- ^g Ezek. 23.
33. 8 ^g We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts :
What shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for ?

¹ Heb. *hard*.

tion comes very near to what appears to be the genuine literal meaning (see ii. 7 note). They suppose the words here to be addressed by Messiah to Israel in "the wilderness of the people" (Ezek. xx. 35), in the latter day, and the former words (iii. 5) by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai.

SIXTH PART. *vv.* 5-14.

5-7. The scene changes from Jerusalem to the birthplace of the bride, where she is seen coming up towards her mother's house, leaning on the arm of the great king her beloved.

5. *Who is this?* Cp. and contrast with iii. 6. In the former scene all was splendour and exaltation, but here condescension, humility, and loving charm.

I raised thee up &c.] Beneath this apple-tree I wakened thee. The king calls the bride's attention to a fruit-tree, which they pass, the trysting-spot of earliest vows in this her home and birthplace. The Masoretic pointing of the Hebrew text (the most ancient traditional interpretation) assigns these words to the bride, but the majority of Christian Fathers to the king. The whole passage gains in clearness and dramatic expression by the latter arrangement.

6, 7. The bride says this as she clings to his arm and rests her head upon his bosom. Cp. John xiii. 23, xxi. 20. This brief dialogue corresponds to the longer one (iv. 7-v. 1), on the day of their espousals. Allegorical interpreters find a fulfilment of this in the close of the present dispensation, the restoration of Israel to the Land of Promise, and the manifestation of Messiah to His ancient people there, or His Second Advent to the Church. The Targum makes v. 6 a prayer of Israel restored to the Holy

Land that they may never again be carried into captivity, and v. 7 the Lord's answering assurance that Israel henceforth is safe. Cp. Isai. lxxv. 24, lxii. 3, 4.

6. The key-note of the poem. It forms the Old Testament counterpart to St. Paul's panegyric (1 Cor. xiii.) under the New.

(a) Love is here regarded as an universal power, an elemental principle of all true being, alone able to cope with the two eternal foes of God and man, Death and his kingdom.

"For strong as death is love,
Tenacious as Sheol is jealousy."

"Jealousy" is here another term for "love," expressing the inexorable force and ardour of this affection, which can neither yield nor share possession of its object, and is identified in the mind of the sacred writer with Divine or true Life. (b) He goes on to describe it as an all-pervading Fire, kindled by the Eternal One, and partaking of His essence :

"Its brands are brands of fire,
A lightning-flash from Jah."

Cp. Deut. iv. 24. (c) This divine principle is next represented as overcoming in its might all opposing agencies whatsoever, symbolized by water. (d) From all which it follows that love, even as a human affection, must be revered, and dealt with so as not to be bought by aught of different nature ; the attempt to do this awakening only scorn.

8-12. A brief dialogue commencing with a question and answer probably made by brothers of the bride concerning a younger sister who will soon be old enough to be asked in marriage. The answer is given in the form of a parable : "If she be a wall," i.e. steadfast in chastity and virtue, one on

- 9 If she *be* a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver :
And if she *be* a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.
- 10 I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers :
Then was I in his eyes as one that found ¹ favour.
- 11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon ;
^a He let out the vineyard unto keepers ;
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand *pieces* of ^a *Matt.* 21.
silver. 33.
- 12 My vineyard, which *is* mine, *is* before me :
Thou, O Solomon, *must have* a thousand,
And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.
- 13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken to thy voice :
¹ Cause me to hear *it*.
- 14 ² Make haste, my beloved,
And ¹ be thou like to a roe or to a young hart
Upon the mountains of spices. ¹ *ch.* 2. 14.
^{*} See Rev. 23. 17, 20.
¹ *ch.* 2. 17.

¹ Heb. *peace*.

² Heb. *Flee away*.

whom no light advances can be made, then let us honour and reward her. This fortress-wall shall be crowned as it were with a tower or battlement of silver. But "if she be a door," light-minded and accessible to seduction (Prov. vii. 11, 12), then let us provide against assailants the protection of a cedar-bar or panel.

10. The bride herself replies with the pride of innocence and virtue already crowned. She has shown herself to be such a fortress-wall as her brothers have alluded to, and her reward has been the royal favour.

11, 12. She next turns to the king, and commends her brothers to his favourable regard by means of another parable. Solomon owns a vineyard in Baal-hamon (possibly Bálbak, or identical with Amana [Conder]), situated in the warm and fertile plains of Cœle-Syria, overshadowed by the heights of Lebanon (iv. 8). This vineyard he has let out to tenants &c.

The bride also has a vineyard of her own (i. 6), her beauty and virtue faithfully guarded by these same brothers in time past. This vineyard now belongs to Solomon. Let him have "the thousand" which is his due—she is indeed herself henceforth entirely his—but let the faithful keepers have their meed as well. At least two hundred silverlings should be theirs—a double tithe of royal praise and honour.

13, 14. The poem having opened with the song of a Chorus in praise of the king (i. 2-4), concludes with a versicle recited by the bride, repeating the last words of her former strain (ii. 17), with one significant change. She no longer thinks of the possibility of separation. The "Mountains of Bether" (division) of ii. 17, are now "Mountains of Besamim" (spices). His haunts and hers are henceforth the same (cp. iv. 6).